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THE SOD PARTY.

PART II.

IN those days the favourite resort for parties of pleasure was the rocky shore of Howth, facing Killiney, and our party had selected a spot which was well known to two or three of them. It was a little hollow in the rocks, where the mould had collected, and was covered with a smooth close sod. Its form resembled a horse shoe, the open being to the sea; and the rock descended at that side perpendicularly six or seven feet to the water. There was just room enough for the party to seat themselves comfortably, so that every one could enjoy the seaward view. It was a considerable distance from the place where the vehicles should stop; indeed, the hill intervened and should be crossed, so that it was no trifling matter to carry a large basket or hamper to it.

O'Gorman resolved not to encumber himself with any thing that might divide his attention with his charming partner; and, accordingly, when they had pulled up, calling to the driver of the jarvey, "Here, Murphy," said he, "you'll take charge of the basket that's slung under the gig, and follow the rest when they're ready."

"Oh, to be sure, sir, sartinly," was the reply, and away went Bob to show the scenery to Miss Kate, from various points quite unknown to her before, leaving the remainder of the party to settle matters as they pleased.

Murphy's assistance was required by the servants who were unlading the carriages first; and each gentleman, taking a basket or bundle, and even the ladies charging themselves with some light articles, they set forward, leaving two or three heavy hampers to the servants' charge.

All having at length departed, except Mr O'Donnell's servant, who had been left in charge of the vehicles, and Murphy, who was to take the gig basket, the latter proceeded to unstrap it. As he shook it in opening the buckles, some broken glass fell upon the road.

"Oh! miallia murther! what's this? My sowl to glory, if half the bottom isn't out o' the bashket. Och hone, oh! Masther Bob, bud you are the raal clip. By gannies, he's dhruv till he's dhruv the knives and forks clane through; the dickens a one there's left; an' as for the glasses, be my sowl he'd be a handy fellow that ud put *one* together. Oh! marcy sa' me! here's a purty mess. Musha! what's best to be done, at all at all?"

"Take it to them any how," answered his companion, "and show it to them."

"Arrah, what's the use of hawkin' it over the mountain? Can't I jist go an' tell what's happen'd?"

"Take care you wouldn't have to come back for it," said the other, "an' have two jounies instead of one. Maybe they wouldn't b'lieve you, thinkin' it was only a thrick that that limb o' th' ould boy put you up to."

The prospect of a second journey, on such a hot day, not being particularly agreeable, Murphy took up the shattered basket and proceeded.

Having yet two hours to spare, the party resolved to consume them by sauntering about until the hour appointed for dinner, which being come, and all having assembled at one point, near the Bailey, they proceeded together to the chosen spot, where they found Murphy awaiting them with a most rueful countenance. He had been vainly trying to invent some plausible excuse for his patron, as he dreaded that all the blame would be thrown upon Bob's hard driving at setting out.

"The bottom's fell out o' the blaggard rotten ould bashket, ma'am, an' the knives an' forks has fell an the road."

"Oh, well," said Mr Sharpe (who did not seem to be either so astonished or angry as one might have expected), "give them a rub in a napkin, a little dust won't do them any harm."

"Why, thin, the sorra a one o' them there is to rub," said Murphy, "barrin' this one crukked ould fork."

Despite his loss, Mr Sharpe could not refrain from laughing when Murphy held up an article, which had certainly been packed for a joke, it was so distorted, one prong being tolerably straight, but the other sticking out as if it was going to march. However, collecting himself, he asked sternly, "Do you mean to tell me that all the knives and forks were lost upon the road?" "Jist so, sir," was the reply.

"The glass; is it safe?"

"Bruck, sir—all in smithereens; sorra as much ov id together as ud show what the pattrern was."

"And the spoons," roared Mr Sharpe, as if the thought had only just struck him.

"Spoons! sir. Oh, be my sowl you'd better look for them yourself; here's the bashket."

"This is a costly party to me," said Mr Sharpe, "but it can't be helped now; so don't let my loss cause any diminution of your pleasure or enjoyment."

Every one looked with perfect admiration at Mr Sharpe, surprised at his magnanimity, and Mrs Harvey thought that she must have altogether mistaken his character hitherto; but she would not have thought so, had she known that he had purposely procured a rotten basket, with the bottom partially broken, in which he had packed a quantity of broken glass, and in which he (of course) had not packed either spoons, knives, or forks, except the very one which Murphy had held up; and it was to prevent examination or inquiry that he had been so voluble upon his arrival in the morning. But had his loss been, as the company supposed, real instead of fictitious, he must have been gratified, nay delighted, at the dismay which gradually spread itself over almost every countenance, at the prospect of having to eat a dinner without knives, forks, or spoons, and to drink without glasses, or even cups.

"Gentlemen," said Mr Harvey, "have you got penknives with you? I have forgotten mine."

So had every one else except Mr Sharpe. He would willingly have kept it secret, but he knew that if he should attempt to use it himself, it would be seen; so he made a virtue of necessity, and lent it to Mr Harvey for the purpose of carving the roast beef!

The dinner was now nearly arranged, and the last basket, in which Mulholland had packed the roast beef, was opened. The remnant of an old college gown was first dragged forth, and Mr O'Brien's servant, to whom the task was assigned, looked in, tittered, looked again, and then drew forth two long large ribs, with a piece of meat about the size of a cricket ball attached to the ends of them. Having laid them on the dish, he dipped again, and produced, with another titter, a shapeless lump of meat without any bone—(he would be a clever anatomist that could tell what part of the beast it had been). Another dip, and with a roar of laughter he raised and deposited on the dish four ribs, from which nearly every morsel of meat had been cut.

"What is the meaning of this, Mr O'Gorman?" said Mrs Harvey, who was quite disconcerted at the turn things had taken, and was now seriously disposed to be angry.

"My dear madam," said he, "it may look a little unsightly, but it is all prime meat, depend upon it. It was dressed yesterday for the College dining-hall."

"You don't mean, surely, to call bare bones *meat*, sir?"

"My dear madam," said Bob, "you will find that there is as much meat without bone as will compensate. Mulholland is a very honest fellow in that respect."

Some laughed, some were annoyed, some were disgusted; but by degrees hunger asserted its rights, and reconciled them a little, especially when O'Gorman pointed out how much easier it would be to carve the small pieces with a *penknife*, than if they had but one large one.

"Well," said Mrs Harvey, "I have long indulged the hope of having a *pic-nic* party so perfectly arranged that nothing should go astray; and so far have I been from succeeding, that I really do think there never was a more unfortunate, irregular affair. I really do not know what to say, and I feel quite incompetent to preside. Mr O'Gorman, as you have the happy knack of making the best of every thing, I believe you are the person best qualified in this company to make the most of the matter, and we must rely on your ingenuity."

"Thank you, ma'am. That is as much as to say, 'Bob, as you have treated us to broken meat, and lost the knives and forks, you will please to carve!' Well, nabockish, this isn't a round table, like Prince Arthur's, for it's little more than half round, and we have old Howth at the head, and old Neptune at the foot of it; but, for the rest, we don't stand upon precedence, and therefore I need not change my place, to preside. Mr Harvey, I'll trouble you for the penknife—I beg pardon—the carver—hem! and that specimen of antediluvian cutlery, the '*crukked ould fork*.' Thank you—shove over the beef now. Ods marrow-bones and cleavers! what a heap! Gentlemen, you had better turn up your cuffs as a needful preliminary; and, perchance, an ablution may also be necessary—you can get down to the water here, at this side."

As soon as the party had re-assembled, after having washed their hands, he again addressed them.

"Mr Sharpe, and Mr Harvey, will you please to drag that turkey asunder? Mr O'Brien, will you tear a wing off that

fowl for Miss O'Donnell? Fitz, gnaw the cord off one of those ale bottles; draw the cork with your teeth, and send the bottle round. The corkscrew was with the knives."

"Draw my teeth with the cork, you mean; I had rather knock off the neck, thank you," said Fitz, about to suit the action to the word.

"No, no," cried Bob, "do you forget that we must drink out of the bottles? Do you want the ladies to cut their pretty lips with the broken glass, you Mohawk! Though, faith," said he, in an under-tone, to his fair companion, "I could almost wish such an accident to happen to some one that I know, that I might have an opportunity of exhibiting my courageous devotion, by sucking the wound."

"A prize! a prize!" cried he, jumping up and running a little distance. He returned with five or six large Malahide oyster shells, that had been bleaching on the cliff, where they had been thrown by some former party. Two of them were top shells. "Here," said he, throwing one to Sweeny, "is a carver for that ham; make haste and put an edge on it, on the rock. Ladies, here are primitive drinking goblets for you. Miss O'Brien, the pleasure of a *shell* of wine with you."

"I have put a very good edge on the shell," said Sweeny, "but I can't cut the ham with it, it slides about so."

"Psha! take a grip of it by the shank, can't you? What are you afraid of, you omedhaun? Hold it fast, and don't let it slide. Costello, break up that loaf and send it round. Mr O'Donnell, will you have the goodness to hold one of these ribs for me. Oh, faith, finger and thumb work won't do; you must take it in your fist, and hold it tight; now pull—bravo! Beau Brummell would be just in his element here. Be my sowl, as Paddy Murphy says, I think if he saw us, he'd jump into that element there to get away."

Mr Sharpe was now in his glory; he had, with Mr Harvey's assistance, torn up the turkey; and seeing that Bob had decidedly the worst job at the table, he asked him for beef. Mr Harvey joined in the joke, and put in also; but their man was too able for them.

"As you are in partnership in the turkey business, in which you have been so successful," said he, "you had better continue so, in the general provision line," handing them a piece sufficient to satisfy two, and prevent them from calling again.

"Bill" (to one of the college men), "here's a shell for you to cut the crust of that pie, and help it. Jem" (to another), Miss Kate O'Brien wishes for some of that chicken that you are trying to dislocate, as gently as if you were afraid of hurting it, or greasing your fingers." "What part?" said Jem.

"A little of the soul, if you please," said Kate, with a maliciously demure face.

"Here it is for you, Miss Kate, soul and body;" and he handed it to her.

"The mirth and fun (now) grew fast and furious."

No water fit for drinking could be procured, and the consequence was, that the ale, porter, and wine, were swallowed too abundantly by the gentlemen. Songs were called for, and O'Gorman was in the midst of the "Groves of Blarney," when Costello shouted out, "A porpoise! a porpoise!"

Up jumped the whole party, and up also jumped the tablecloth, which Mr O'Donnell and Mr Sharpe had fastened to their coats or waistcoats.

They sat directly facing the opening to the water, with Mrs Harvey between them; so that when, by their sudden start up, they raised the cloth, it formed an inclined plane, down which dishes, plates, bottles, pies, bread, and meat, glided, not majestically, but too rapidly, into the sea. Then, oh! what a clamour!

Above the jingling of broken bottles and plates, the crash of dishes, and the exclamations of the gentlemen, arose the never-failing shriek of the ladies. And then came a pause, whilst they silently watched the last dish as it gracefully receded from their view.

"Oh! faith," said Mrs Harvey (surprised by her emotion into using a gentle oath), "I think it is time to go home now."

"Faith," said O'Gorman, "it is time to leave the dinner-table at all events, since the things have been removed; but as to going home, we have so little to carry, or look after, besides ourselves and—hic—the ladies, that I think, with all respect to Mrs Harvey, we may—hic—take it easy. I wish I could get a drink of water to cure this hic—hiccough; for I am certain, Miss O'Brien, I need not assure you—indeed I can appeal to you to bear witness—hic—that it was the *want*, not the quantity of liquid, that has brought it on."

The "want," however, had made Bob's eyes particularly and unusually luminous; nor did Kate take his proposition "to launch all the hamper and baskets, after their recent contents, into the sea," to be any additional proof of his self-possession; and when, with a caper and whoop, he sent Mulholland's basket to the fishes, her suspicions that he was slightly elevated became considerably strengthened.

"Mrs Harvey," said Mr Sharpe, "you think your party unfortunate. I have been upon a great many parties of this kind, and I assure you I have seen far more unpleasant affairs—(Gentlemen, here are a few bottles of wine that have escaped the watery fate of their unhappy companions). Now, the very last party that I was on last season, three or four of the gentlemen quarrelled (pass the wine if you please), and one of them, in the scrimmage, was knocked over the rocks into the sea."

"Mercy on us, Mr Sharpe! was he drowned?"

"Why, no, but his collar-bone was broken, and his shoulder dislocated. But a worse accident happened in coming home."

"What was it?"

"Poor Singleton had come, with his wife and two nieces, in a job carriage; the driver got drunk, and overturned the whole concern, just where the road branches off down to the strand; they rolled over the cliff, and fell about twenty feet; the horses were both killed, and the whole party dreadfully injured, barely escaping with life. Then, the quarrel after dinner (by which Jones got his collar-bone broken) led to a duel on the following morning, in which one of the parties, Edwards, fell; and his antagonist, young O'Neill, got a bullet in his knee, which has lamed and disfigured him for life. Pass the wine, gentlemen."

"No! no! no!" screamed Mrs Harvey, on whom the above delectable recital had had the desired effect, and who was worked into a desperate state of terror, "no more wine, gentlemen, if you please. Come, ladies, we must return at once, before evening closes in."

Each lady being perfectly satisfied that the gentleman who had fallen to her lot would keep sober, whatever *others* might do, demurred to the early retreat; but Mrs Harvey was too much frightened at the prospect of returning with gentlemen and drivers drunk, not to be determined; and, accordingly, with much growling, and the most general dissatisfaction, the party broke up.

"I am done with *pic-nics*—I'll never have any thing to say to one again," said the disappointed directress. "There never was any affair more perfectly arranged, never was so much care taken to have things regular. I never proposed to myself such enjoyment as I expected this day."

"My dear Mrs Harvey," said O'Gorman, to whose countenance the last four or five shells of wine had imparted an air of the most profound wisdom, "my dear Mrs Harvey, 'the whole art of happiness is *contentment*.' This is the great secret of enjoyment in this life—this is the talisman that clothes poverty in imperial robes, and imparts to the hovel a grandeur unknown to the halls of princes—this is the true philosopher's stone, for which alchemists so long have sought in vain, that converts all it touches into gold—this is the cosmetic that beautifies the ill-favoured wife, and the magic wand that bestows upon the frugal board the appearance of surpassing plenty—this is the shield of adamant proof, on which disappointment vainly showers its keenest darts—this is the impregnable fortress, ensconced in which, we may boldly bid defiance to the combined forces of sublimity ill— and whether it be announced from the pulpit or the cliff, by the dignified divine or the college scamp; be it soothingly whispered in the ear of the deposed and exiled monarch, or tendered as comfort to the discomfited authoress of a *pic-nic*, it still retains, in undiminished force, its universality of application"

Here Mr Sweeny facetiously gave him a slap on the crown of the hat, which drove it down, and stuck it gracefully over his eye, thereby breaking the thread of his discourse. He then addressed the fair Catherine; but all his eloquence and profundity were unavailing to induce her to return with him in the gig. She would listen to nothing but the carriage, and as room could not be made for him inside, he mounted the box, leaving the gig to any one that pleased to have it. Nor was it long untenanted. Frank Costello and Bill Nowlan mounted together, and were found in it next morning fast asleep, in the stable-lane behind Mr Sharpe's house, the horse having found his way home when left to his own guidance.

The remainder of the party arrived as safely, but somewhat more regularly, in the evening of their eventful day, and all dissatisfied except Mr O'Gorman, and

NAISI.

STREET TACTICS.

You, most respectable reader, who owe no man any thing that you are not able and willing to pay, may know nothing of the tactics alluded to in the title of this paper. But there is, you may depend upon it, a pretty numerous class of the community to whom these tactics are quite familiar, and who practise them to a greater or lesser extent every day of their lives.

Street tactics, let us define the term, is the art or science of avoiding all persons on the streets, and all places in the streets—shops, for instance—whom and which, for particular reasons of your own, you are desirous of eschewing.

The art is thus one of deep concernment to the whole of that numerous and respectable body known by the generic name of "gentlemen in difficulties." This term, however, is one of very extensive signification, and includes various descriptions of gentlemen as well as difficulties; but on the present occasion we mean to confine ourselves to one particular class—the gentlemen whose difficulties arise from their having more creditors than crowns—the gentlemen who have contrived to surround themselves with a large constituency of the former, and who cannot by any means contrive to get hold of an adequate supply of the latter—the gentlemen who are sufficiently respectable to get into debt, but not sufficiently wealthy to get out of it.

The reader can have no idea how difficult a matter it is for a gentleman of this description to work his way through the streets, so as to avoid all unpleasant encounters; how serious a matter it is for him to move from one point of the city to another. To him the streets are, in fact, as difficult and dangerous to traverse as if they were strewed with heated ploughshares, or lined with concealed pitfalls. He cannot move a hundred yards, unless he moves warily, without encountering somebody to whom he owes something, or passing some shop where his name is not in the most savoury odour.

It is, then, the manœuvring necessary to avoid these disagreeables that constitutes street tactics, and confers on the gentleman who practises them the character of what we would call a street tactician.

This person, as already hinted, when he moves at all, must move cautiously, and must consider well, before he starts, which is his safest course; which the course in which he is least likely to encounter an enemy in the shape of a creditor, and which will subject him to running the gauntlet of the fewest number of obnoxious shops. The amount of manœuvring required to accomplish this is amazing, and the ingenuity exhibited in it frequently very remarkable.

When on the move, the street tactician is obliged to be constantly on the alert, to have all his eyes about him, lest an enemy should come upon him unawares. This incessant vigilance keeps him always wide awake, always on the look-out, and makes him as sharp as a needle. Even while speaking to you, his keen and restless eye is roving up and down the street to see that no danger is approaching.

Like the training of the Indian, this incessant vigilance improves his physical faculties wonderfully, especially his vision, which it renders singularly acute. He can detect a creditor at a distance at which the nearest friend, the most intimate acquaintance of that person, could not recognise him: he can see him approaching in a crowded street, where no other eye but his own could possibly single him out.

Gifted with this remarkable power of vision, it is rare that the street tactician is taken by surprise, as it affords him time to plan and effect his escape, at both of which he is amazingly prompt and dexterous.

As the great object with the street tactician in moving from one point of the city to another is not the shortest but the safest course, he is necessarily subjected to a vast deal of traverse sailing, and thereby to enormous increases of distance, being frequently obliged to make the circuit of half the town to get at the next street. His way is thus most particularly devious, and to one who should watch his motions without knowing the principles on which he moves, would ap-

pear altogether incomprehensible. Here he crosses a street with a sudden dart, there he turns a corner with a slow and stealthy step; now he walks deliberately, now as if it were for a wager. Again he walks slowly; then comes a sudden brush: it is to clear some dangerous spot in which an enemy is lurking in ambush—the shop door of a creditor. Now he cuts down an alley; now hesitates before he emerges at the opposite end; now darts out of it as if he had been fired from it, like a shell from a mortar. And thus, and thus, and thus he finally completes his circuitous and perilous journey. It is fatiguing and laborious work, but it must be done if he would avoid being worried to death.

Besides that ever watchfulness, that sleepless vigilance that distinguishes the street tactician, there is about him a degree of presence of mind not less worthy of special notice. It is by this ready fortitude and coolness of temper that he is enabled, even when in what may be called the immediate presence of an enemy, to devise and execute with promptness and decision the most ingenious expedients for avoiding personal contact—that enables him, when within twenty yards of the foe (when so near that a less experienced hand, one of less steady nerve, would inevitably fall into the clutches of his dun, and who would at once be given up for lost by any on-looker) to effect a retreat, and thus avoid the crave personal—in so cool and masterly a way, that the enemy himself shall not know that he has been *shirked*, but shall be deceived into a belief that he has not been seen, and that the pretext, or pretexts, under cover of which the street tactician has evaded him, has or have been true and natural. This is a difficult point to manage; but old hands can do it admirably, and, when well done, is a very beautiful manœuvre.

The skilful street tactician never exhibits any flurry or agitation, however imminent his danger may be: it is only green-horns that do this. Neither does he hurry or run away from an enemy when he sees him. This would at once betray malice prepense, and excite the utmost wrath of the latter, who, the moment he got home, would put his claim into the hands of his lawyer; a proceeding which he must by no means be provoked into adopting.

The skilful street tactician takes care of this, then, and studies to effect his retreats in such a way as to excite no suspicion of design. He does, indeed, take some very sudden and abrupt turns down streets and up lanes when he sees an enemy approaching; but he does it with so unconscious a look, and with such a *bona fide* air, that neither you nor his creditor would for a moment suspect any thing else than that he was just going that way at any rate. This operation requires great command both of muscle and manner, and can be successfully performed only by a very superior practitioner.

To the street tactician, carts, carriages, and other large moving objects, are exceedingly useful auxiliaries as covers from the enemy, and the dexterity and tact with which he avails himself of their aid in effecting a "go-by," is amazing. By keeping the cart, carriage, or other body in a direct line between him and the foe, he effects many wonderful, many hair-breadth escapes. The chaise or cart is in this way, and for this purpose, a very good thing, but the waggon of hay, slow in its motion, and huge in its bulk, makes the best of all protecting covers.

With a waggon of hay moving along with him, and a very little manœuvring on his own part, the expert tactician could traverse the whole city without the risk of a single encounter. But his having such an accompaniment for any length of time, is of course out of the question. He must just be content to avail himself of it when chance throws it in his way, and be thankful for its protection throughout the length of a street.

We have heard experienced street tacticians, men on whose skill and judgment we would be disposed to place every reliance, say, that it is a very absurd practice to run across a street to avoid a shop, and to pass along on the opposite side. Such a proceeding, they say—and there is reason and common sense, as well as scientific knowledge, in the remark—only exposes you more to the enemy, by passing you through a larger space of his field of vision—by giving him, in short, a longer, a fuller, and a fairer view of you. Far better, they say, to walk close by his window at a smart pace, when the chances are greatly in favour of your passing unobserved.

This way of giving a shop the "go-by" requires, indeed, more courage, more resolution than the other, being, certainly, rather a daring exploit; but we are satisfied, that, like boldness of movement in the battle-field, it is, after all, the least dangerous.